CEREBUS
AARDVARK-VANAHEIM
93
DEC
2.00
CANADA
1.70
IN U.S.
ISSN 0712-7774

N O T E • F R O M • T H E P R E S I D E N T

Aloha.

Well, the night before we left to get here, I was on Harlan Ellison's **Hour 25** radio show. And before that Gerhard and I were out for dinner with Harlan and his wife, Susan, Frank Miller and Lynn Varley.

Sounds like Frank is serious about moving into self-publishing for his next project. Sounds like Alan Moore and some of our friends from Merry Olde are leaning in that direction as well.

And there all of you are. Thousands of miles away. (Except for the five who buy Cerebus at Strawberry Fields Forever). And here I am, sinking fast into the Church and State story-line.

Aloha.

Honolulu, January 18, 1987

Cerebus World Conquest

TOUR '87

We are planning a World Tour for late 1987.

Countries where we have all our appearances confirmed are Canada, the United States, England, France and Germany.

Any major shops in other countries are invited to join by writing to us.

No cost to you. (neat huh?)

CEREBUS

No. 93 DECEMBER 1986

DAVE SIM
President

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

GERHARD
Backgrounds, cover-colour, and tones.

Circulation
31,000

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Toronto, Ontario

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CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. PO BOX 1674 STN. C KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2
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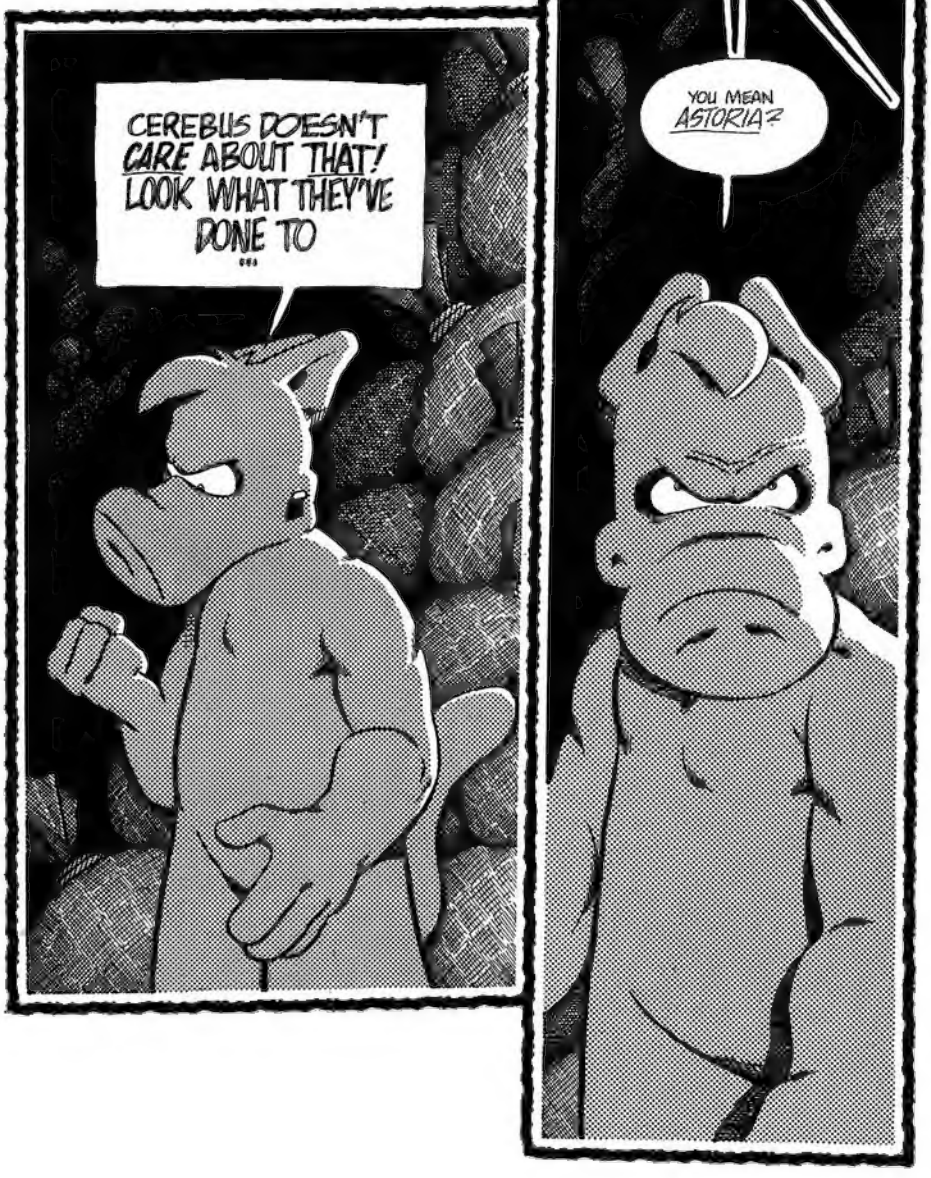
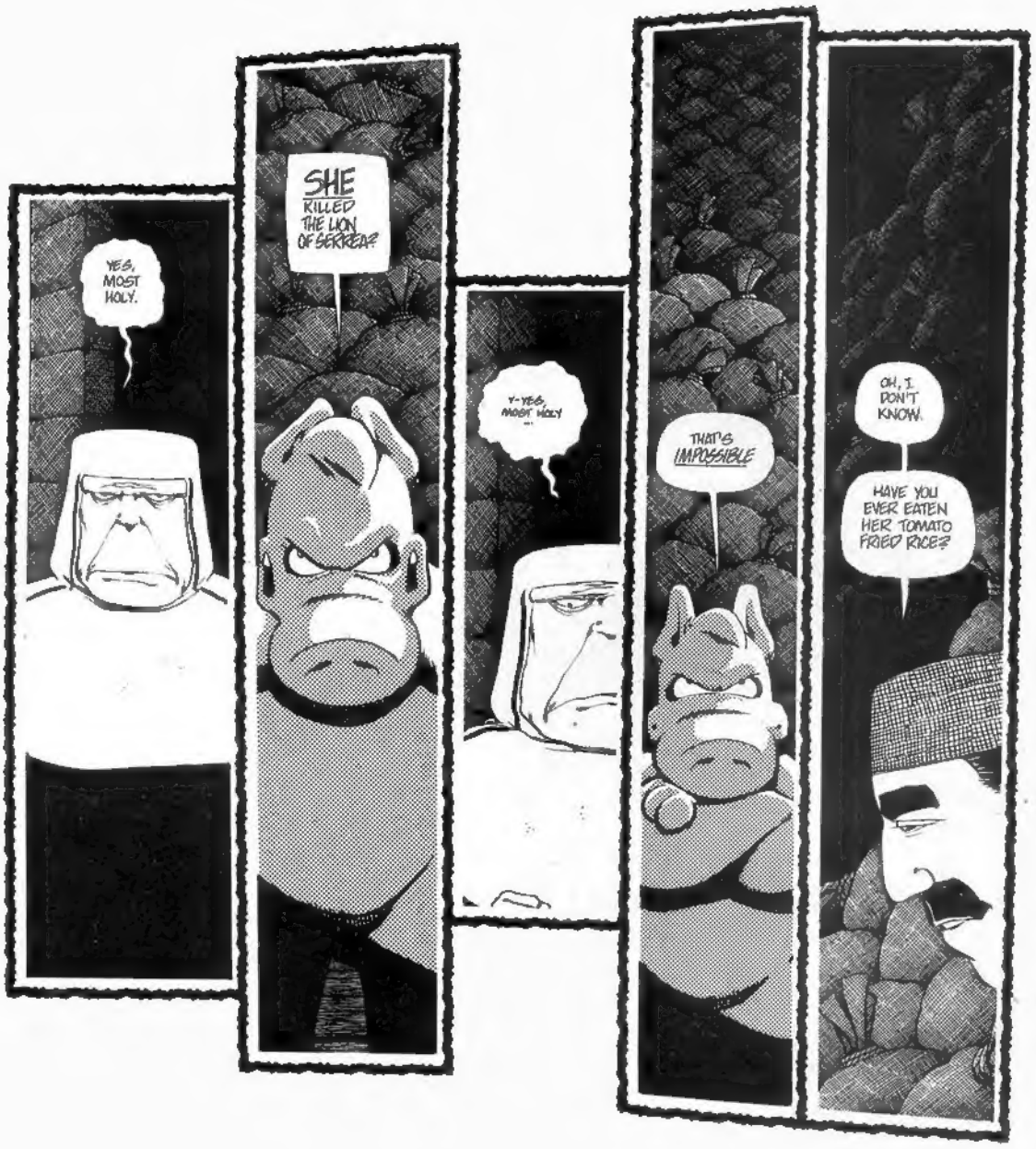
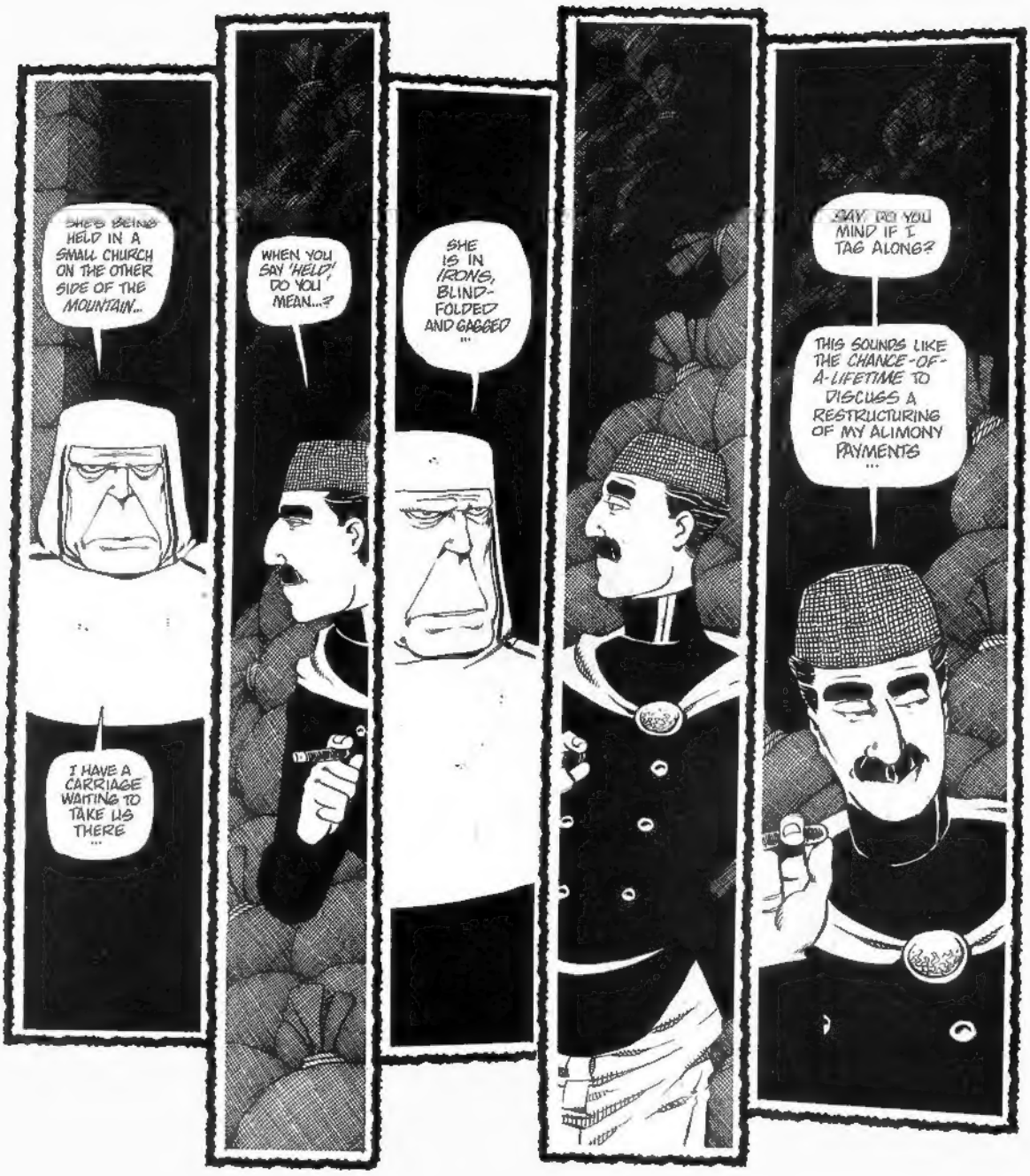
PRINTED IN CANADA BY PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC., WINDSOR, ONTARIO

the PRISONER



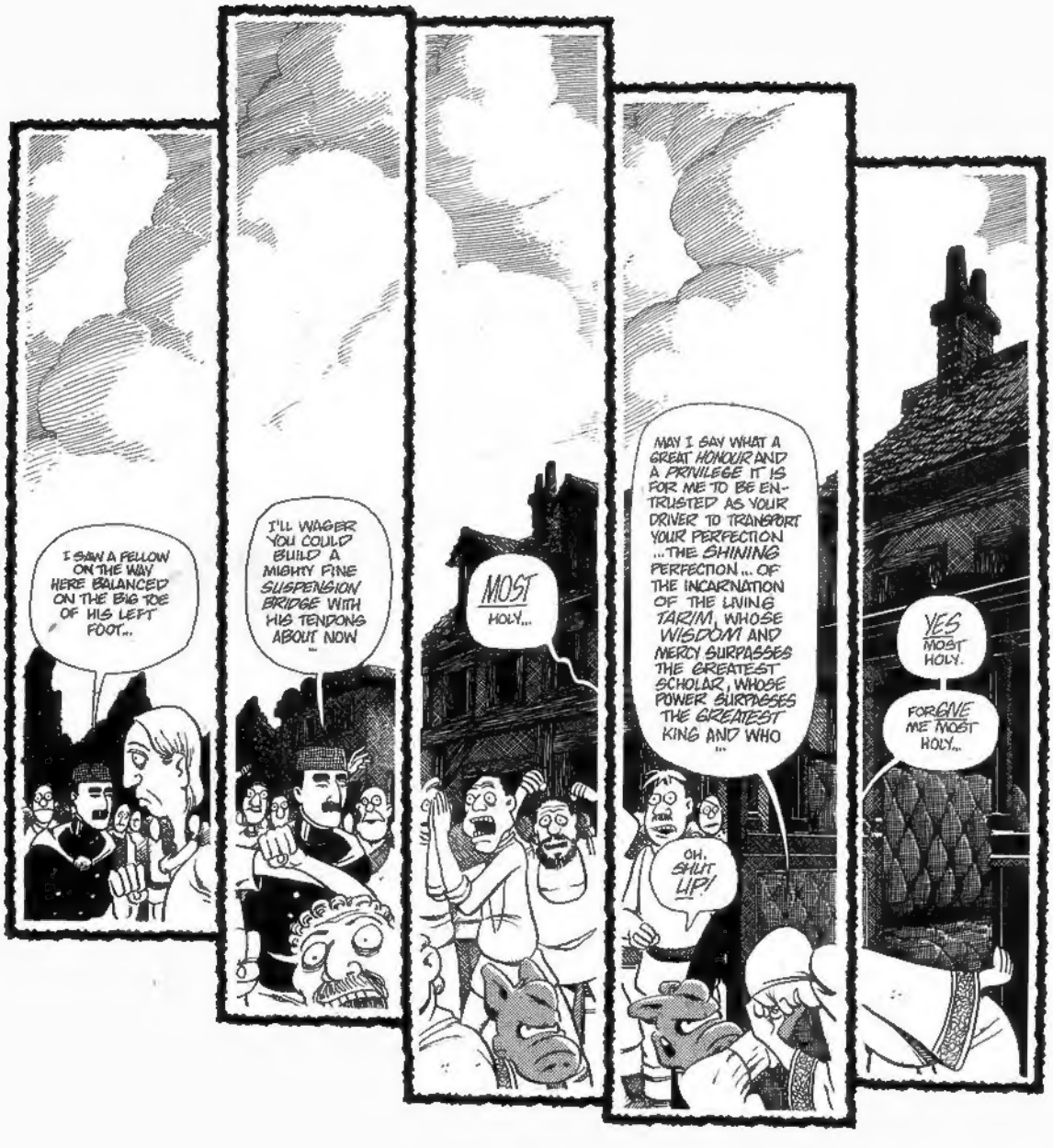

YES, MOST HOLY.
SHE KILLED THE LION OF SERREA?
Y-YES, MOST HOLY
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE
OH, I DON'T KNOW.
HAVE YOU EVER EATEN HER TOMATO FRIED RICE?

THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE OF... SORCERY... AS WELL.
'AT A SOUNDS MORE LIKE HER STOFFED PORK A-CHOPS...
HM...
EXCUSE ME I THINK I JUST HEARD SOME-THING FALL IN THE PANTRY I BETTER CHECK...
WHERE IS SHE NOW?

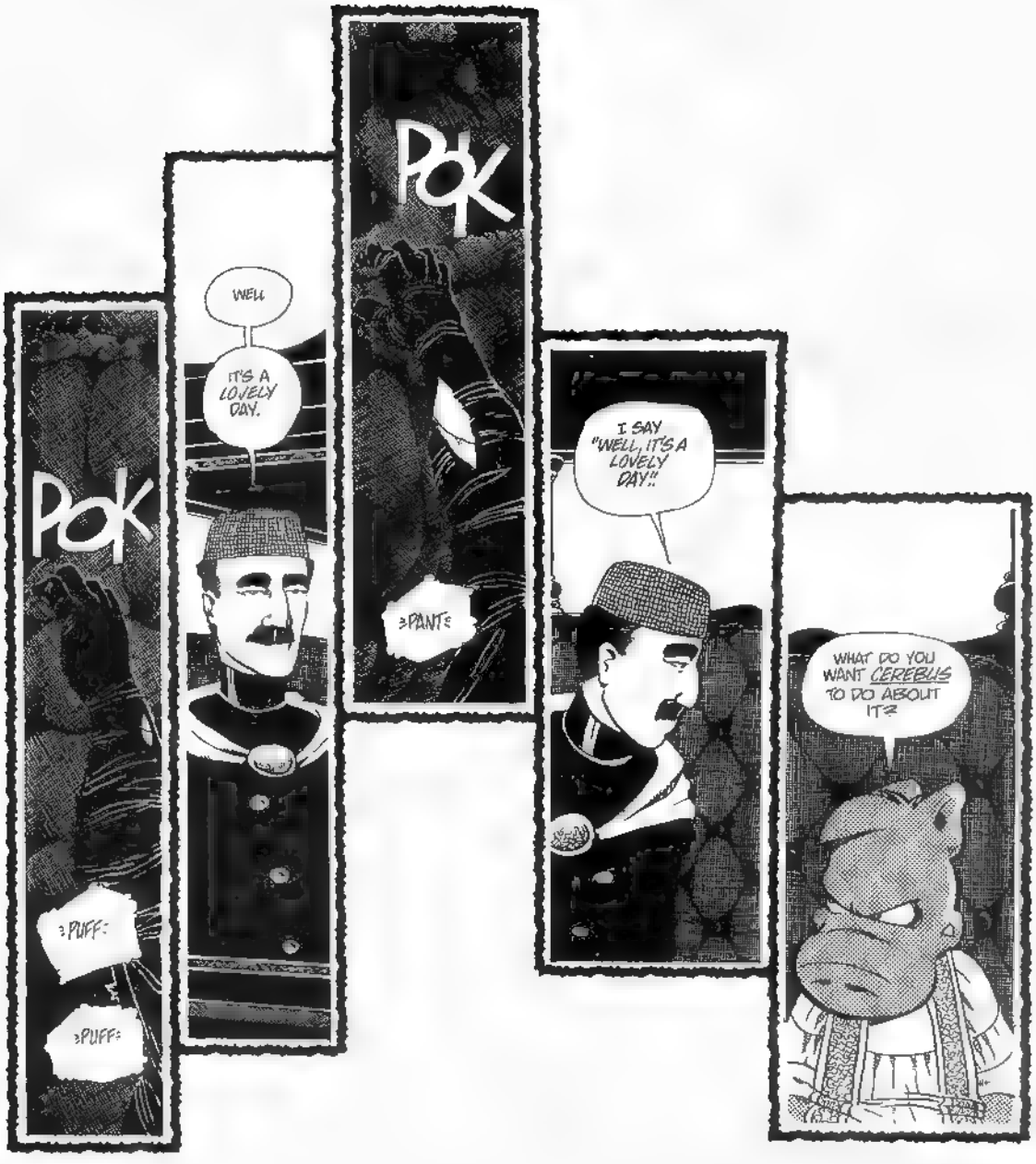

SHE'S BEING HELD IN A SMALL CHURCH ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN...
I HAVE A CARRIAGE WAITING TO TAKE US THERE ...
WHEN YOU SAY 'HELD' DO YOU MEAN...?
SHE IS IN IRONS, BLINDFOLDED AND GAGGED ...
SAY, DO YOU MIND IF I TAG ALONG?
THIS SOUNDS LIKE THE CHANCE-OF-A-LIFETIME TO DISCUSS A RESTRUCTURING OF MY ALIMONY PAYMENTS ...

SUIT YOURSELF ...
YOU STAY HERE. FIND SOMEONE TO MELT THAT PILE OF GOLD COINS...
HAVE THEM MADE INTO A SPHERE ...
...SO BIG.
B-BUT, MOST HOLY, I HAD... PLANNED TO ADVISE YOU... TO BRING YOU UP TO DATE...
...ON...
...THE...
...SITUATION.

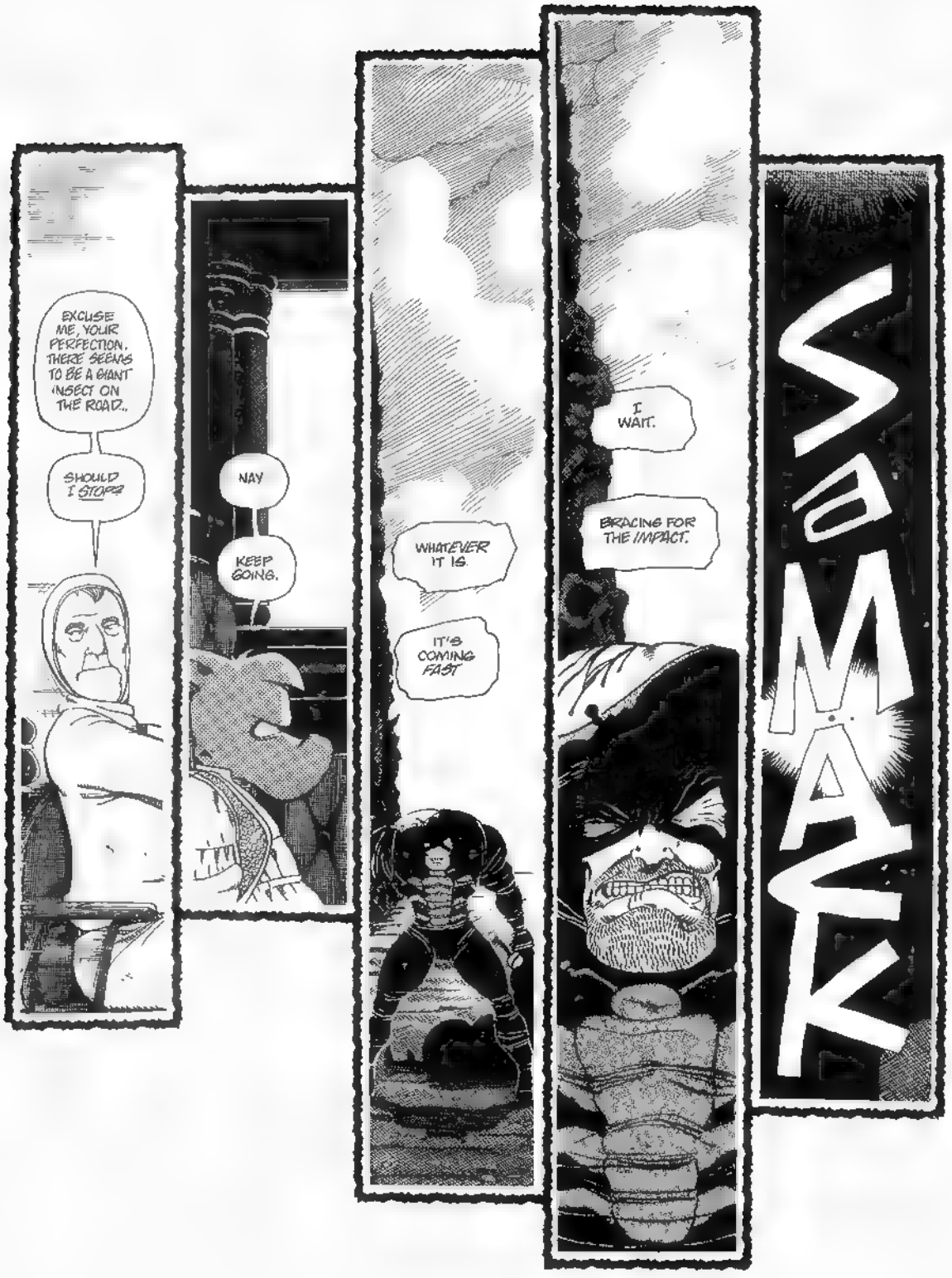
YES, MOST HOLY ...
AS SOON AS IT'S READY, BRING IT TO THE CHURCH...
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS RHAPSODY IN RAGS STILL-LIFE OUT HERE
AYE. CEREBUS TOLD THEM THAT IF THEY MOVED, THEY WOULD SPEND THE REST OF ETERNITY SUCKING MOLTEN LEAD THROUGH IRON STRAWS ...
WELL, THAT CERTAINLY EXPLAINS IT...


I SAW A FELLOW ON THE WAY HERE BALANCED ON THE BIG TOE OF HIS LEFT FOOT...
I'LL WAGER YOU COULD BUILD A MIGHTY FINE SUSPENSION BRIDGE WITH HIS TENDONS ABOUT NOW
MOST HOLY...
MAY I SAY WHAT A GREAT HONOUR AND A PRIVILEGE IT IS FOR ME TO BE ENTRUSTED AS YOUR DRIVER TO TRANSPORT YOUR PERFECTION ...THE SHINING PERFECTION ... OF THE INCARNATION OF THE LIVING TARIM, WHOSE WISDOM AND MERCY SURPASSES THE GREATEST SCHOLAR, WHOSE POWER SURPASSES THE GREATEST KING AND WHO ...
OH. SHUT UP!
YES MOST HOLY.
FORGIVE ME MOST HOLY...

CARRIAGE RIDES CAN BE SO MONOTONOUS DON'T YOU THINK?
I KNOW. LET'S PLAY 'I SPY' ...
I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE SOMETHING THAT IS... PURPLE.
EXTENSIVE BRUISING ABOUT YOUR HEAD AND SHOULDERS IF YOU TRY TO KEEP PLAYING IDIOT GAMES...
CLOSE ENOUGH.


POK
WELL
IT'S A LOVELY DAY.
POK
:PANT:
I SAY "WELL, IT'S A LOVELY DAY."
WHAT DO YOU WANT CEREBUS TO DO ABOUT IT?
:PUFF:
:PUFF:

JUST WHEN I START TO THINK THAT I MISS BEING MARRIED
WHAT?
NOTHING, DEAR JUST TALKING TO MYSELF
WELL, STOP IT
I IGNORE THE RIBS SWIMMING IN MY CHEST CAVITY...
RE INFLATE ONE LUNG...
TIGHTEN MY STOMACH MUSCLES TO HOLD MY INTESTINES IN PLACE.
IT'S A TWENTY-EIGHT FOOT JUMP, STRAIGHT UP...
WHAT-- AH SAY
WHAT TH'
LANDING DRIVES THREE MORE VERTEBRAE THROUGH THE BASE OF MY SKULL INTO MY BRAIN
OUCH


EXCUSE ME, YOUR PERFECTION. THERE SEEMS TO BE A GIANT INSECT ON THE ROAD..
SHOULD I STOP?
NAY
KEEP GOING.
WHATEVER IT IS.
IT'S COMING FAST
I WAIT.
BRACING FOR THE IMPACT.
MAN

WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN?
JUST ANOTHER USELESS LUMP OF FLESH, SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD
ONE STUPID MOVE. TWO STUPID MOVE. THREE STUPID MOVE. FOUR STUPID MOVE. FIVE STU
I HAVE FOUR POINT FIVE SECONDS TO THINK ABOUT IT ON THE WAY DOWN
STUPID MOVE.
WHAM

THE SOONER EVERYONE DIES AND LEAVES CEREBUS ALONE, THE HAPPIER CEREBUS WILL BE
YOU DON'T TRAVEL AT ALL WELL, DO YOU?
COR
FOUR 'OTELS AN' NAUGH' A BLEEDIN ONE OF 'M'S GOT A POMP REGISTUHED ...
IP OY DOWN'T GET MOY DRUGS SOON, OY SHALL 'AVE TO RESOR' TO DRAG'IC MEASURES

WOT?
MO'DRASTIC THAN SNOR'EEN UP 'ALF THA' GRAVEL DRIVEWHY?
DID OY DO THA'?
YOU KEP' INSISTEEN' THEY WUZ CHUNKY BITS THAT 'AD FAWWEN OUTTA Y' BAGGIE ...
FUMF
TIK
TIK
TIK
TIK
FANK GOWD.
OY FHOUGHT MOY NOSTRIWS 'AD 'EALED OVUH...

RUMBLE RUMBLE
OY, WOT'S THA' NOISE?
RUMBLE RUMBLE
MUFFINK, DEAR... IT'S JUST A CARRIAGE GOWIN BOY.
RUMBLE RUMBLE
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
WITE!
STOP!
Y'POWPNESS! IT'S ME!
WITE!

CLIK CLAK
KEEP AN EYE ON THIS MAN HE'S A TROUBLE-MAKER
YES, YOUR PERFECTION
WAIT! WHAT ABOUT THE ALIMONY PAYM...
SLAM
TAP TIP TAP TIP TAP TIP TAP TIP
THERE SHE IS, YOUR PERFECTION
AYE
O'M NA ONE Y' WON.NIT T'GIVE AWL Y'COULD TO..
BLOODY 'ELL
ARSK 'IM IF 'E'S GOWT SOME DROGA.

REMOVE THE GAG.
NOW THE BLINDFOLD

NOW GET LOST
BUT... YOUR PERFECTION
SHE'S DANGEROUS
DANGEROUS?
SHE'S CHAINED TO THE WALL!

YES, BUT JUST TO BE SAFE..
IF SHE TRIES TO SPIT ON CEREBUS, CEREBUS WILL CALL YOU..!
NOW GET OUT OF HERE
YES, YOUR PERFECTION
TIP TAP
TIP TAP
TIP TAP
TIP TAP
TIP TAP
CLIK
CLAK

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AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

So there you all were. Thousands of miles away and suddenly a Federal Express package arrived from Karen and seventy-five of you landed on my kitchen table. Let's see what some of you had to say, shall we?

****

Please do me a favour and remove me from your freebie list. I have enjoyed reading your complex fictions as a sort of literary-visual game of hide-and-seek, the "prize" in the game (as usual) being to see you, the creator, at the core of the work. However, the game is over for me now – ironically not because the fiction is any less intriguing, but because the "you" behind the creations is an ugly creature not worth the search. I never deluded myself that you **valued** rational debate, but I believed you gave lip-service to such value in the interest of maintaining a facade of intellectuality. The flatness and brevity of your arrogant name-calling was certainly calculated to offend, and it surely did. It also as surely showed you forth to me as a man sinking under the weight of a pridefulness which rests upon the denigration of others as a means to magnify the self. Having seen this, no amount of artful contrivances by you can interest me, for they only serve to reveal your core nature again and again, and in my eyes that core, that "you", is a self-promotor who is incapable of perceiving diversity of opinion in terms other than "attack" and "defense". I might almost call you a solipsist, if that term did not imply considered philosophical thought.

Adios

Cat Yronwode
Eclipse

Consider yourself removed.

I value rational debate.

You did a column called "Making Art" in the front of a month's worth of Eclipse Comics saying that you identified with creative people because you used to make quilts for a living and demanded at the end of the column that "we creative people must be free". In this very column you identified yourself as a "protector of poets". I would like to know how you rationalize these two viewpoints with the extensive and arbitrary changes you make in creative work that is not yours.

I am attacking you. And Richard Pini and Rick Oliver and the viewpoint of "my funny books, my artists, my way".

What is your defense?

Or have I just given it? "My funny books, my artists, my way".

****

Dave --

First an introduction – I am a long time comic book freak. How long? Let's just say I'm still bemoaning the price increase from 10¢! I am **not** a retailer or distributor. I get a 20% discount at my local comic shop because I buy more than 20 books a week, every week. This, I trust, establishes me as an interested bystander.

Second, the reason -- Your "Aardvark Comment" in Cerebus #90 upset(s) me, and I would not be surprised to find many in the industry going way past "upset" --- somewhere between "insulted" and "who the **hell** does he think **he** is?"

Comic book retailers are **not** in business to make money for Dave Sim.

Reread that, please. The average shop consists of the owner, one or two minimum wage helpers, and less than one thousand square feet of **rented** space. My livingroom is larger than some shops I've been in. The owner is interested in extracting a reasonable living from the business of swapping paper for paper. He does **not** care about Dave Sim.

I had to order my own copy of **High Society** because the shop I frequent could find only **two** others interested -- I doubt that they order more than 25 copies of Cerebus, but they order **AND SELL TWO BOXES** of every Marvel mutant magazine. They also have the place plastered with DC and Marvel posters and other promo paraphernalia. Nada aardvarks

It seems to me you need them more than they need you

You are the one who wants to put out a weird B & W, responsible only to yourself. I happen to buy Cerebus because (1) it's damn good and (2) it's available. "Feel little obligation" to your distributors and they'll feel less towards you – and then it **won't** be available for people like me to buy. And I'll miss the li'l grey bastard

Tom Zmudzinski
9007 Ivanhoe Road,
Oxon Hill, MD., 20022

Comic book distributors are in business to make money for me..partly. Just as I am in business, at least partly, to make money for them. And they get to say that they carry all the major direct sales comics including Cerebus, the only one still going after ten years. We need each other about equally, I think.

****

Dave, Dave, Dave:

Honestly, I don't know how much more of this nonsense I can take! Okay, it was bad enough when the dialog in CEREBUS started dwindling and its monthly schedule was thrown all to hell. But hey, you were quite busy travelling, partying, living the good life and buying up penthouse apartments. No problem. I can dig it.

And then we started getting all kinds of rude and snotty answers in the **letter column, followed by your essay on personal independence. But, hey, again, as you've said a trillion times, CEREBUS is your book**, and who the hell needs all those people who have supported you all along, shooting off their big bazoo's about "lack of quality" and "being cheated"? The nerve of the vile scum!

Anyway, I got my hot little paws on CEREBUS #90 the other day, (late again, but I'm sure you had a good reason: Purchasing some off shore drilling equipment, perhaps?) and I open up to the inside front cover, and what do I see?

"Creative people listen to you people because you make that a condition of their employment. You're worse than useless when it comes to creativity You are intrusive "

Well, thanks, Dave. Thanks a whole fuckin' lot. We love you, too

I can't speak for everyone else except myself, but I rather resented that little statement. First off, one does get the impression that you're getting a little too elitist for the rest of us poor slobs. Now I can understand the fame and money that comes with success going to your head a bit, but remember one

very important fact: Those "useless" fanboys are the ones responsible for your present prosperity. Without them, you're just another guy scrawling comics in your high school notebook. They made you. Abuse them enough, and perhaps they might break you. Basically what I'm trying to say is this: When you've created a body of work that rivals a Harlan Ellison or Jorge Luis Borges, **then** perhaps you can sit in your ivory tower and piss on the rest of us. But until then, keep in mind that you're doing a **comic book**. A black and white with a circulation of 30,000. Not literature. Junk culture. Perhaps when CEREBUS is finished, and published in deluxe graphic novel format, it will be considered literature. I hope so, but that day isn't here yet.

Secondly, while I agree 100% with your statement about not wanting to ask anyone else, (or having anyone ask you) for advice about how to go about the creative process, please keep in mind that everyone who reads this title isn't a half-wit. I'm sure that many creative individuals, some who might even be on the verge of entering this field, really enjoyed having you lump them all together into a padded room with "Retards: Beware" stencilled on the door. Is it too much to ask, to have you choose your words a little more carefully? I'm not too crazy about being labelled a "no-talent bozo who can't write and draw complaining to someone who can write and draw". As stated before, I can only speak for myself: **I am** a writer, (and not that anyone gives a shit, but I can draw fairly well, too) and I don't make complaints to anybody that I don't feel deserves them. I always try to have a logical foundation on which to base my arguments — I may not always succeed, but nobody's perfect, eh?

Finally, if the only reason you listen to your readers is because "it's a condition of your employment", then why not just ditch the lettercol all together? I, for one, would be tickled pink to have a series of my own, where people could write in pro or con! At least people are taking the time out to write and let you know how they feel. They wouldn't do that if they didn't care.

If I had the time, I'd go into how this High Society/distributor/retailer business equally sucks, but I'm sure you'll get enough letters about that.

It may be hard to tell from all this criticism, but **I like** CEREBUS. And I want to see it continue as much as you do. Let's put an end to all this bullshit and go back to having some yuks, huh?

Sincerely yours;

Mark Haden Frazer
W39700 Sunnyfield Drive,
Oconomowoc, WI., 53066

Mark Haden, Mark Haden, Mark Haden, Frazer, Frazer, Frazer. I was talking about editors, man. I love getting mail pro-or-con. Cool yer engines.

****

Dave -

I've written about a dozen or so letters in the past few months, but have mailed nary-a-one. They consisted mostly of the usually compliments, hopefully delivered in a semi-humorous way, with the purpose of declaring that you should forget the mindless criticisms that seem to overflow your mailbox and do things your own way. You obviously **don't** need me to tell you that, and you have relayed the message to your following far more eloquently than a letter from me ever could. So screw that. Instead I'd like to comment, or rather, **confirm** your position in your statement to the distributors.

I must admit I was amazed how right you were in that open-letter. I worked in a comic-shop for about three months and learned enough about the business to know that it's something I'd probably **never** do. In that time I went from collecting two titles (CEREBUS and SWAMP THING) to hording about 20 titles. I also learned how biased store operators can make or break a book. The owner of this store didn't like CEREBUS, and so he was elated when it would sell out. Sell out a vast amount of 8 copies. To confirm your column, I would always buy 2 copies, my friend I copy, a friend of the owner I copy, and the store owner would keep one himself. 5 of 8 already gone. The store also had a "file" system where customers had a file with a list of books that were pulled and saved for them until they picked them up. The remaining three copies were put into these files. So before the store even opened on Friday (the day new books were first on sale) CEREBUS was never even on **display**! Also consider I got my copies at 40% off, the owner just kept his, and the others got 20% off. (Friends and good customers get this discount). So this store sold **no** copies at cover price and over half went to "insiders". No re-orders were made unless requested, no newcomers ever see any CEREBUS displayed to leaf thru. The owner didn't care, because CEREBUS was "boring, he should go back to being a barbarian". The other crime here is the power that store owners have. This guy could sell 40 copies of **3-D Three Stooges** just by saying "it's good", and yet CEREBUS would always be shoved aside. In fact, I knew some customers who **hated** CEREBUS because of the owner's influence, and they hadn't even **read** an issue! That's insane.

I managed to convert 5 people while working there, but it's still unthinkable how many copies CEREBUS would sell if it had the proper backing. As you say, CEREBUS is guaranteed quality, forever.

This is no solution, nor is it heartening news, all it does is cast a darker shadow on the business. Because CEREBUS dares to be different, this shop owner denounces it as boring. How many other shops are like this? probably many. It's sad that the one B & W that deserves everyone's attention can be "black listed" in this manner. I hope the distributors and dealers weigh your comments with great thought, as they make great sense.

To end, I just like to say that CEREBUS is the best B & W comic out, and second only to **Elektra** in being the best comic out. I feel that **Elektra** is the quintessence of the medium, and along with CEREBUS, will be the basis for the hopeful renaissance of the comic book in the near future. While your writing is on par with Miller's. I think Sienkiewicz is artistically superior for his ambitious combination of fine art illustration and the comic format. "Better" is a term I despise when speaking of artwork, and Sienkiewicz is definitely **not** better than you — perhaps just more knowledgeable and slightly more daring. Fuck this — I'm not comparing the two of you anymore, you're both the best. I feel so wishy-washy now.

CEREBUS is the one comic book that I look forward to buying, and now that 20 titles has dwindled down to 4 again, CEREBUS is still the **only** title I'm never, never, never disappointed with. Thanks Dave, I owe ya more than ya can imagine. CEREBUS truly makes me enjoy life a little more!

Stay healthy and take care of yourself — and never give in!!

Dan Berger
109 Kenwood St.,
S Amherst, OHIO., 44001

See, the idea for that column was to find out how far a personal plea would go, whether retailers as a group pay any attention to Cerebus at all. Thanks for the input.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, INC.

Hi Guys,

I'd like to mention that there are a number of stores purchasing High Society and selling it for 30 to 35 dollars. A number of people have written informing me of this so I'll know that I'm getting "ripped off".

Sorry, guys. As long as I'm getting my price, what someone resells them for is entirely up to them. That's a big reason that no price is printed on the books.

After our full page ad in the Toronto Star we have less than half our previous total remaining. Eleven hundred and twenty-six books to go out of the six thousand.

And lest we forget; the first edition, consisting of six thousand copies is being sold on a first-come first-serve basis by VISA and MASTERCARD phone order, certified cheque or money order only. Single copies are $20.00 US and $25.00 CDN plus $2.00 for postage, or 1 box of 18 books for $300.00 US and $400.00 CDN (boxes will be shipped UPS).

Please call (519) 576-7820 or (519) 576-0610 between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Sincerely,

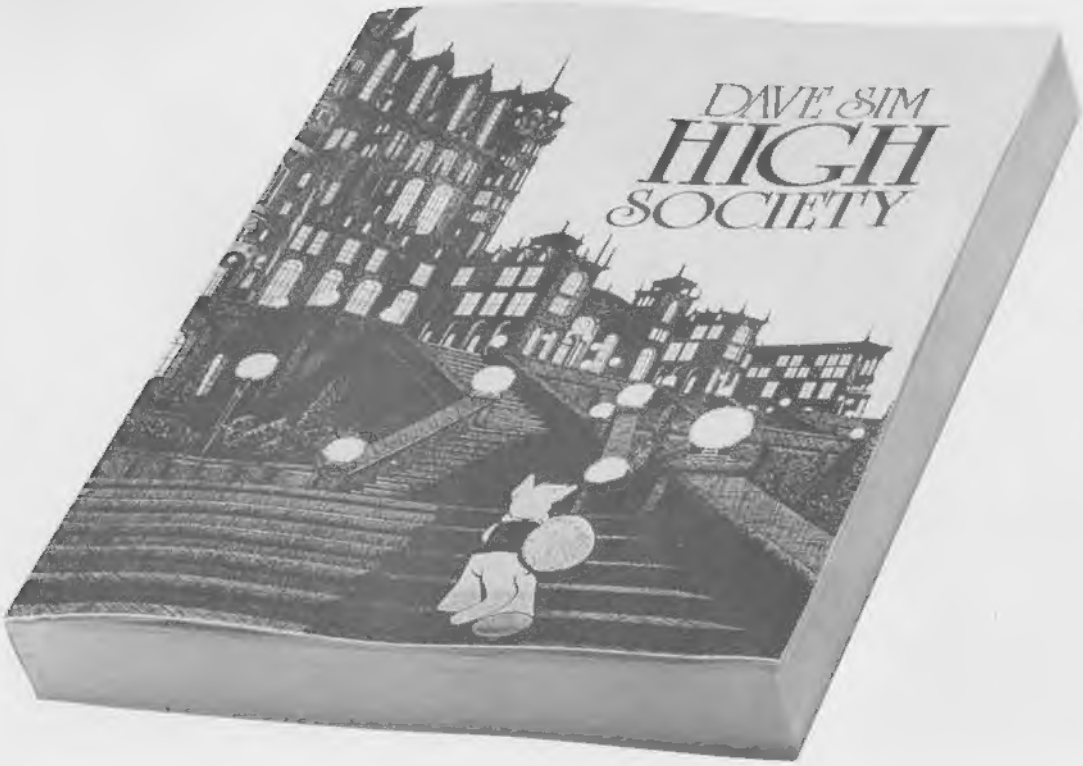
Dave

Dave Sim, President
Aardvark-Vanaheim, Inc.,

P.S. Information coming in next issue in regards to Cerebus and Church & State, Volume 1. Stay Tuned.

BOX 1674 STATION 'C' KITCHENER ONTARIO N2G 4R2

VISA



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